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ABSTRACT

An intensive summer training course in Mandarin Chinese designed to help currently employed language teachers introduce exploratory Mandarin Chinese courses to their schools is described. Training current staff eliminated three common barriers to exploratory program introduction: needs for (1) additional teaching staff; (2) additional funds; and (3) extensive qualifying programs. Letters were mailed to 1,000 foreign language teachers in Indiana inviting them to apply for the expense-paid workshop. Of 22 teacher respondents, 15 were selected for participation. The major program goals were: (1) to prepare participants to introduce a course; (2) to develop a model for introduction of such courses in critical languages; (3) to provide, review, or develop appropriate teaching materials; (4) to sensitize participants to Chinese history, culture, economics, politics, plastic arts, literature, values, and lifestyles and (5) to prevent or correct cultural stereotypes and misconceptions. Another goal was to establish both a cooperative network among the Indiana middle and high school teachers who would be introducing Chinese studies, and an ongoing liaison between these teachers and the Ball State University foreign language faculty. The program resulted in ingenious approaches to course implementation and increased interest. (MSE)

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By Rita Gardiol

Training In-Service Middle and High School Teachers to Present Exploratory Courses in Mandarin Chinese

For years at state teachers meetings, I had heard supervisors or principals admit the need to introduce critical languages while always adding a series of BUTS---

1) we don't have FUNDS to hire new teachers
2) we don't have, or wouldn't be able to find qualified teachers
3) we don't have adequate materials
4) we don't have the classroom space for additional language classes.
5) we can't determine the extent of student or community interest in such classes.

Meanwhile, our state governor, our Department of Commerce officials, our mayors and city council officers throughout the state were making increasingly frequent trips to China, Japan and Korea in an effort to establish sister-state and city relationships and initiate trade, economic, technical and educational agreements. Noone, however, seemed to be seriously considering introducing courses in Korean, Japanese, or Chinese language or culture into our schools--an undertaking that would seem to be a logical first step to awakening public awareness and disseminating information about the Orient.

When state funds became available for innovative educational projects, I proposed a project aimed at introducing Chinese into the public school system in a cost-effective way designed to overcome the standard objections listed above.

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Design of the Program

My proposal was to provide intensive summer training in Mandarin Chinese for currently employed foreign language teachers and help them introduce exploratory courses in Chinese at their schools. I decided to concentrate on Chinese since China, with its one billion people, offers the greatest potential for economic, cultural and technical exchanges. Of the possible Chinese languages or dialects I selected Mandarin because it has been the official language of the Peoples Republic since 1949 and is now taught, with standardized pronunciation in all schools throughout China.

Project participants would be expected to learn elementary Chinese language skills and prepare outlines and materials for short exploratory or introductory courses in Chinese for middle or high school students (similar to the exploratory courses often taught in the more common European languages). Exploratory courses are short, six to eight week courses, designed to "explore" or present an overview of the language and culture of another country, and introduce students to its language, customs, social mores, geographic characteristics and civilization. They aim in part to correct stereotypes and eliminate misconceptions and biases about languages and cultures with which students are not familiar. They are also designed, in part, to help students make an informed choice about whether or not they'd be interested in continuing the study of that language and culture. While exploratory courses in the the modern European languages are frequently taught in Indiana middle and high schools, no such introductory courses existed in Eastern languages and cultures.

It was hoped that these introductory courses would be a necessary first step to the implementation of full Chinese courses.

By preparing CURRENTLY EMPLOYED TEACHERS to teach Chinese, four of the problems mentioned earlier could be addressed: 1) there'd be no need for NEW teachers 2) no need for additional funds and 3) no need for extensive qualifying programs. The fourth need, space, could be resolved by careful scheduling if current teachers were used, and the fifth need, student interest assessment, could be achieved by providing students an exploratory course in Chinese without making a costly commitment in personnel , materials or programming.

I wrote to all 307 Indiana high school superintendents and principals to determine how many would be willing to make a commitment to initiate an experimental course in Chinese in their schools if funding were provided to train currently employed foreign language teachers to introduce it. I received precisely nine responses. Fortunately, all nine were enthusiastic! I then sent personal letters to the approximately 1,000 foreign language teachers in Indiana middle and high schools, inviting them to apply for the all expense paid workshop. Their only obligation would be to work hard and to introduce an exploratory course at their schools in the year following the grant. Of the twenty two teachers who responded, fifteen were selected on the basis of their apparent interest, commitment, references, and proven ability to serve as catalysts in their school systems. Curiously, only ONE was from one of the nine school systems whose superintendents had indicated interest and/or support for the project!

(The major obstacle to positive responses seemed to be the requirement to initiate an exploratory course in the year following the project. A number of interested persons wrote that they would be interested in applying but could not be assured of meeting this requirement.)

After the selection was completed, I wrote to those selected, stressing that the projects' four major goals were:

1. to prepare participants to introduce an exploratory course in Mandarin Chinese
2. to develop a model for the introduction of exploratory courses in critical languages (in this specific workshop, Mandarin Chinese) into Indiana middle and high school schools
3. to provide, review or develop teaching materials appropriate for middle or high school students learning Chinese: books, videos, film strips, slides and tapes on language,culture, and history, course packets, sourcebooks, taped lessons and dialogs, overhead transparencies, posters, charts, maps, flash cards, games, songs, realia and artificats
4. To sensitize participants (and through them, Indiana middle and high school students, schools, and communities) to the history, culture, economics, politics, plastic arts, literature, values and life styles of the Chinese people, and to prevent or correct stereotypes, biases,and misconceptions and develop an appreciation of the values and beliefs of China and its people.

I also explained that the seminar would provide instructors who were native speakers of Mandarin Chinese and native facilitators to assist with language practice, reading, and writing.

Part of the goals of the project were also to establish a cooperative network among the Indiana middle and high school teachers who would be introducing Chinese studies and to establish an on-going liaison between these teachers and the Ball State University foreign language faculty and Chinese instructors and facilitators.

We also pledged that we'd provide a vehicle and center (at our departmental offices) for the housing, dissemination and sharing of ideas and Chinese teaching materials.

Foreign language teachers were chosen for this project in part to eliminate the need for schools to hire additional personnel to introduce Chinese and, in part, because the project (rightfully, as it turned out), was based upon the hypotheses 1) that trained foreign language teachers could more easily learn a new language and 2) that they would adapt and apply their knowledge of foreign language methodology to the teaching of the new language, and 3) that they would know how to assemble and/or develp the audio-visual and other resource materials needed to teach a new foreign language.

All participants were required to:

1. commit five weeks of resident, intensive study to learning Chinese language and culture
2. assist in the preparation of materials to be shared by all
3. inaugurate and teach at least one exploratory course in

Chinese at their school in the year immediately following the program

4. participate in the evaluation of their courses by submitting a video cassette of some classroom activities or lessons.

To prepare their proposed courses, participants divided into four "interest groups" middle school short (six to eight week) and long (one semester) courses and high school short and long courses. Groups collaborated in making course outlines and then divided up the work of preparing specific materials.

Since the participants were all experienced foreign language teachers, they were able to pool their expertise and their knowledge of what would and wouldn't work with specific age groups and within specific time restrictions. The middle school teachers, for example, unanimously agreed that TPR (total physical response) materials would be highly effective with their students, and asked the Chinese facilitators to help them prepare taped and written lists of TPR commands.

The grant provided almost $5,000 worth of Chinese materials which were useful in several ways:

1. participants could review them, checking in the catalogues they had received those that were worth buying and those that were not.
2. Participants could excerpt and duplicate selected pages from numerous items.
3. participants could determine which works they would like to use on a two week loan basis when teaching.

These materials were indexed, catalogued and listed and printed lists were provided to all participants. The materials were retained in our departmental offices after the workshop so that they could be mailed to participants upon request. The only charge to users is the cost of return mailing. This use of grant materials as a central resource pool saved the fifteen participating schools the expense of buying new materials to introduce Chinese.

Workshop participants had a demanding schedule:

8:00- 9:30 Chinese language

9:40-10:30 Language practice

10:40-11:30 Reading/Writing practice

12:00- 1:00 Lunch

1:00- 2:30 Chinese language

2:40- 3:30 Reading/Writing Practice

3:45- 5:00 Materials Preparation

5:30- 6:30 Supper

7:00- 8:30-Culture course (discussion of readings, movies, slides, songs)

They earned twelve quarter hours of language credit and four quarter hours of credit in Chinese culture. They were free on weekends from noon each Friday and could go home if they wished. Most, however, used some of that time to type and work on materials preparations, since the pace of the language classes required practically full time study during the week.

Advantages of the Program

This program provided a necessary first step to introducing formal courses in Chinese into Indiana s schools. The teachers

who participated in the programn learned elementary, first year Chinese (far more than they could ever teach in an exploratory course) and developed materials and course outlines to use in introductory courses. The state and the university developed a systematic model for retraining in-service foreign language teachers so that they could introduce critical, lesser taught languages. Best of all, participants developed experience in teaching Chinese by doing so in the exploratory courses, experience that will certainly benefit those who go on to introduce formal, for-credit Chinese courses. Participants became so well acquainted that they naturally maintained a communication network with one another, sharing ideas and materials throughout the year. To further this spirit of communication, I used their reports and letters to me in a newsletter sent to all participants summarizing their experiences and noting ideas or suggested changes in the materials and course outlines.

Follow Up

A second summer of intensive training in Chinese provided thirteen returning members of the original fifteen with intensive intermediate (second year) language learning and with a formal course in Chinese history. (One participant dropped out because he transferred to a school that would not make a commitment to present an exploratory course. The other "drop out" so much regretted not attending, that she made independent study arrangements for second year Chinese during the subsequent academic year, and rejoined the group for the third year of the project.)

When state funding provided for a third summer of advanced

intensive training and travel in China, fourteen participants were eligible to go.

The third summer was designed to provide three weeks of guided tours to major areas such as Guilin, Guangzhou, Beijing, and Xian, and three "working" weeks in Wuhan. At Wuhan, (where we were hosted by the Wuhan Institute of Physical Education with whom our university had already established exchange programs) our group was to study Chinese and teach English. As anticipated, this portion of our Chinese adventure proved to be the highlight of our trip.

Our Chinese hosts provided guided tours each morning to places ordinary tourists would never get to visit: nursery, elementary, and secondary schools; universities and institutes of science, humanities, and physical education; embroidery, silk, and carpet factories; hospitals and acupuncture clinics; a farming commune and a visit to a farm family home there; visits to "craft" factories where jade, cloissone and lacquer work were done, and even visits to a Christian church and seminary.

Afternoons were dedicated to the study of Chinese and the much needed improvement of our use of the four tones necessary in speaking Chinese. In the evenings each participant taught English to groups of from fifteen to twenty-five Chinese. Our "students" were faculty members from our host and neighboring institutions, graduate students, and senior undergraduates. Their participation was on a purely voluntary basis as our stay (and courses) unfortunately coincided with their final exam period).

The English lessons had been included in part as a means of

earning our room and board during the stay in Wuhan, and thereby making an "in-kind" contribution to the cost of the trip. In part, also, we had hoped they would provide an opportunity for participants to get to know a small number of Chinese persons reasonably well. Even more than we had anticipated, this latter part was true, and genuine friendships developed as teachers and students exchanged photographs and even albums showing their families, schools, towns, and farms, their homes, their work and play activities. Some members of our group were even invited by their students to visit their homes, apartments or dormitory rooms, a privilege they felt was very special.

In addition to their formal study of Chinese, participants were encouraged to make every effort to **use** the language. Being language teachers, all were more than eager to do so. Their use of oral language (listening and speaking) improved noticeably during their time in China. All were expected to keep a journal of their activities and impressions as we toured, worked and studied. Upon our return, participants were provided with the textbooks necessary for an independent study course in Chinese literature in translation, and were given one semester to complete the outline of study and a final comprehensive essay test on the material. This made it possible for them to complete the number of courses required for a minor in Chinese.

Having completed this minor, it is expected that program participants will have acquired the minimum number of academic hours necessary for teaching certification in Chinese. This will permit them to introduce formal first and second year Chinese classes into their schools.

Evaluation of the Program

Participants were asked to respond to a comprehensive questionnaire evaluating the workshop, to provide the workshop director wih one video casetta of classroom instruction for review and evaluation, and to have their students evaluate the MATERIALS used so that they could report back on their effectiveness and improve or redesign them.

The enthusiastic response to their Chinese classes in the schools thus far indicates that students and parents, even in isolated rural communities are enthusiastic about studying something as novel, yet potentially useful, as Chinese.

Outcomes

The state evaluator for the project, after observing activities at the workshop, wrote in his report to the State Department of Education:

> Impressive was the enthusiasm and the commitment of the participants to carry out their obligation at their own schools and to continue their studies in Chinese language and culture. It was obvious that these . . . teachers will do all they can to promote the learning of Chinese language and culture in their schools.

One of the most significant outcomes of the project was that it has shown it is possible for foreign language teachers to acquire a significant level of proficiency in an uncommony-taught language in an intensive summer session. This is an important finding in that it shows that this kind of workshop could serve as a model for training existing language

teachers in the uncommonly taught languages, a model which has several advantages:

1. Teachers are already certified:
2. they have experience in the methodology and pedagogy of foreign language education, and
3. they are already employed by the school system and available to add a Chinese (or other uncommonly taught language) component to the curriculum."

The teachers who participated in the project were all ingenious in finding ways to implement Chinese courses at their schools in the first and subsequent years following the workshops. Some presented semester long introductory courses, (a few doing so in both spring and fall) others presented enrichment progams for gifted students, and still others introduced Chinese as a special interest activity.

All found that their courses were enormously successful in heightening school and community consciousness about China and the role and importance of Asia as a whole. A parent sat in on one class, some fellow teachers sat in on another, and several of the programs attracted the attention of their local T.V. channels and newspapers. Were the results significant? Decidedly! Because this pilot group introduced Chinese to aproximately 300 Indiana school children in each of the three years following the workshop and will continue doing so indefinitely.

Better yet, all participating teachers reported <u>increased</u> requests in each year of the program. Most are seeking ways in which to expand their programs in coming years, and are planning

to apply for the certification that will permit them to introduce for-credit first and second year high school courses.

Our program, difficult, demanding, but effective and rewarding, has shown that, given the interest of state governement and educational administrators, given a corps of dedicated teachers and concerned principals and supervisors willing to take a risk, given a body of students and communities willing to try something new, critical languages can be introduced into the nation's middle and high schools with minimal resources in an effective, expedient and cost-efficient manner.

Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Central Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (Nashville, TN, April 13-15, 1989).